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CHRIST AND THE PENTATEUCH.

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In the first number of the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, the Rev. Dr. Kellogg has an article entitled, "A Tendency of the Times." As the anxiety there expressed concerning the trend of certain movements may be somewhat widespread, it may be profitable to look a little more closely at the reason for the movements. The present paper will confine itself to the so-called higher criticism, and its attitude towards the words of Christ.

The argument of Dr. Kellogg, if I correctly apprehend it, may be summarized as follows:—

1. Christ is God, and, therefore, omniscient.
2. Whatever Christ says is true.
3. Christ affirms that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.
4. Moses, therefore, must have been the author of the Pentateuch, and if we deny that he wrote the Pentateuch, we deny the truth of Christ's words, and, therefore, we deny His divinity.

The remarks I wish to make may be conveniently grouped under the separate steps of the argument, as I have numbered them above.

1. The majority of critical students of the Old Testament in this country believe that Christ is divine. As I am not authorized to speak for any one but myself, I will say that I accept the common faith of Christendom as formulated in the Nicene Creed, and in our own (the Westminster) Confession. I believe that "the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, . . . so that two whole perfect and distinct natures—the Godhead and the manhood—were inseparably joined together in one person." It must be evident to one who knows how much this belief is

to the Christian that no light reason will induce him who holds it to entertain theories even seemingly at variance with it.

2. The difficulty is made at the second point by facts which appear in the Gospel history. Some of them give rise to the Kenotism, which, as well as the higher criticism, excites the distrust of Dr. Kellogg. The Kenotists certainly cannot be classed as men who have an interest in denying the divinity (or deity if you choose) of our Lord. To their devout and reverent spirit Dr. Kellogg himself bears willing testimony. What is the compulsion which drives them to their theory? It is a compulsion exercised not by infidel arguments, but by facts in the Gospel history itself. I will quote but one passage, Matt. xxiv., 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." The difficulty in reconciling this with the omniscience of the Son of God is obvious. The Kenosis is one attempt to reconcile them. Another is to suppose a dual consciousness in Christ, and that here He speaks out of the human consciousness as though He had said "in His humanity the Son does not know, though in His divine nature He knows all things." Whether this does not attribute an unworthy reservation to Christ I will not stop to inquire; nor do I wish to argue the question of the Kenosis. It is sufficient to show the difficulty in predicating absolute omniscience of Christ in His human nature. And if in one case He spoke out of His human nature, reserving His divine knowledge, why may He not have done so in another case?

The difficulty arises from the limitations imposed by human thought and human speech upon the expression of absolute truth. Doubtless the truth of God can be expressed but very imperfectly in the most perfect human language. But if a revelation is given, it must submit to these limitations. When we say, then, that "whatever Christ says is true," we mean that it is true so far as the limitations of human language permit. But the limitations of time and circumstance must also be borne in mind. Christ's revelation to the Jews is not exactly the same as it would be to us were He to come now, because of the change in our point of view. Now, those who insist most strenuously upon the New Testament testimony to the authorship of the Old Testament forget this.

They reason that Christ used language which *to those who heard Him* certainly meant that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as we now have it. We must, therefore, admit this conclusion. Let me give a parallel case. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord says (Matt. 5: 45): "That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good." There can be no question that those who were thus addressed supposed the earth to be a flat plain, around which the sun revolved. It would be possible, therefore, for us to construct an argument on this passage exactly parallel to the one of Dr. Kellogg, thus:

Christ is God, and, therefore, omniscient.

Whatever Christ says is true.

Christ affirms that the sun revolves around the earth.

The sun, therefore, revolves around the earth, and to deny this is to deny that Christ is divine.

This argument, of course, convinces no one in our day. Yet it has been used in the past, and I fail to see wherein it differs from that which bases the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch on the word of Christ. The fact is that we cannot say that every affirmation of Christ is true in the sense in which His first hearers most naturally understood it. He would not have submitted Himself to the limitations of human life and of human language unless He had cast His thought in the forms familiar to His own time, and built up His system upon a foundation already laid in men's minds. This is clear if we consider what is implied in any other procedure. Suppose Christ had said, in the language of scientific exactness, "your Heavenly Father causes His earth to revolve so as to bring the sunlight upon both evil and good." It is plain that He would have perplexed the minds of His friends, and have given His enemies an opportunity to strike at Him as a madman. At the best, He would have started an angry discussion in natural science, with no profit to the souls of men. Now, if criticism be a science, we should no more make Christ teach criticism than we make Him teach any other science.

At the risk of becoming tedious, let me suppose another case. Taking it for granted, for the time being, that the Wolfian theory concerning Homer is correct, the Apostle Paul would have quoted him still as Homer, if he had had occasion

to quote him at all. He would no more have said "as we find it written in the cycle of poems concerning the Trojan war," than Christ would have said "the earth revolves upon its axis to bring the sun into view." The reason for the use of the language of common life is as plain in one case as in the other. Or to put it in the language of our own time. Assuming that the theory of the Baconian authorship of the plays commonly known as Shakespeare's* is established, let us suppose Christ to come again to teach us lessons of faith and love such as we all need. It is not inconceivable that He might point a moral with a quotation from the greatest of our poets. Would He not have said "as Shakespeare said," or "as Shakespeare has written?" I cannot, in my own mind, conceive any other course as practicable for Him.

3. What I have written seems to me to make it perfectly clear that had our Lord affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, this would not compel us to assert that authorship, or denying it, to deny His divinity. The curious point, however, is that He nowhere makes such an unqualified assertion—as must be clear to one who will examine the list of passages noted by Dr. Kellogg. He does, no doubt, assert the authority of Moses as a lawgiver, and attributes to him "legislation belonging to each of the three great parts" of the Pentateuch. But a direct and categorical affirmation of the point in dispute is nowhere to be found. And if we are to be held strictly to the words of Christ, it can hardly be captious to demand that they should unmistakably affirm that which we are expected to believe. I have no theory as to the sacredness of any supposed scientific method. Nor do I think that the critics in general are full of the infallibility of their own notions. Least of all are those in this country (at any rate) actuated by hostility to revealed religion, or to the faith of Jesus Christ. While I am persuaded of their love of truth, I will not dwell upon that, lest I should seem to exalt them above others who cannot see as they do, though actuated by love for the same precious possession.

It cannot be a slight force which compels the venerable

* Of course I do not make any affirmation on this point any more than concerning the Wolfian hypothesis, or the Kenotist doctrine of the incarnation.

Delitzsch to give up positions which he has defended for a generation, and in the last edition of his "Genesis" to recognize the right of critical analysis, and the substantial correctness of its conclusions. Is it beyond our power to conceive of this force? It is simply the force of facts. Dr. Kellogg will have us maintain the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Will he have us affirm that Moses wrote "he pursued as far as Dan" (Gen. xiv., 14), when the city did not receive that name until the period of the Judges? Does he suppose Moses inserted a list of Edomite kings in his history, prefacing it "these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel" (Gen. xxxvi., 31)? Would Moses write the "Canaanite and the Perizzite were then in the land," when they were still there before his very eyes? Could Moses say of a speech recorded by himself, "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel *beyond Jordan?*" These examples lie on the surface, and many more might be adduced. The intellectual necessity is upon every one to account for them. The old way was to account for them prophetically, so that Moses by the spirit of prophecy wrote the account of his own death. Probably we shall not be blamed for asserting nowadays that the spirit of prophecy would hardly dictate misleading indications of a later date in an inspired book. The scientific spirit is, doubtless, guilty of many absurdities, but we can hardly count among them this: that it assumes the fossils in the rocks to be part of the life history of the earth, and that they were not created *in situ* by immediate divine fiat as a puzzle to the careful observer.

It is becoming the fashion even among the most conservative authors to account for the difficulties just noticed by the theory of "slight redactional changes." But who will mark for us the limit at which such changes cease to be slight? Careful observation of the facts show that such changes can be traced in more places than the few which are commonly conceded to show them. It must be plain to the careful student of the Old Testament that the books from Genesis to 2 Kings, inclusive, form a continuous history. The book of Joshua takes up the story where Deuteronomy leaves it—at

the death of Moses. Judges begins "after the death of Joshua." The Philistine oppression of the latter part of the book of Judges is evidently the same in which we find Israel in the time of Samuel, while the first book of Kings continues, without a break, the narrative of the last years of David. Now, while all recognize the directing Spirit of God as thus giving us a connected history of His people, is it unreasonable or untheological to suppose that Spirit to have brought about this unbroken continuity by means of redactional changes? Time was when the most conservative critics emphasized the importance of Ezra's work in fixing the canon of Scripture. In truth, his influence in regard to the Scriptures cannot be exaggerated. Suppose him to have gathered the scattered documents of his time, including the different Mosaic codes, and with skilful editorship to have fitted them into one another, leaving their peculiarities untouched in large degree, but adding occasional notes of explanation or filling in a gap. I suppose it self-evident that some one has done this for the books of Kings and Samuel. Why it should be impossible for the earlier books I fail to see. I fail to see, also, why the writings of Moses, thus embodied in a comprehensive work, should not still be his literary property.

But it is said that the theory of the critics is a product of the evolutionary philosophy to which everything must be fitted. I know of no answer which can be given to this assertion except a direct denial. Vatke, indeed, was a Hegelian. But Reuss, who came independently to the same conclusions, was so repelled by Vatke's Hegelianism that he did not read his book for thirty years after its publication. Of the other critical students of the Old Testament, no one has avowed any philosophical preference whatever, while it is evident from the difference of their theological position that they cannot be dominated by any one theory. It is unlikely that they should so completely conceal their agreement on this fundamental point, did the agreement actually exist.

It might be remarked here that too much weight must not be given to a supposed hostile bias as discrediting the results of investigation. In the progress of knowledge it has often happened that the new discoveries have been made under the

stimulus of dissatisfaction with the theories of the fathers. The mind naturally sceptical, disinclined to take anything on trust, resolved to test everything for itself, is, indeed, the one most apt to discover new truth. But whatever the motive of the discoverer, no observer can conscientiously excuse himself from the task of examining the discovery. And no candid observer ought to defend himself in refusing to admit facts on the theory that the facts cannot be facts, because discovered by an unbeliever. The great majority of Old Testament critics in this country were educated in the theories of Hengstenberg and Keil. Our text-books have drawn from these and older "orthodox" sources for a long time back. To give up the ingenious defences raised by these able men in some cases certainly has not been resolved upon, without a struggle. The only motive in accepting the theories of more advanced critics has been a steadfast resolve frankly to give the facts their full weight. It is, indeed, the theory of some, that we should never abandon a post to the enemy. The best military science, however, commands us to waste no strength in defending a post which is conclusively shown to be untenable.

4. The danger of insisting that the denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch involves the denial of our Lord's divinity must be clear. This procedure can, at the best, only perplex the less decided, while it may drive the more independent into active disbelief. What would be the result to insist now in this way on the theory that the sun moves around the earth, or on the theory that the universe was created in six literal days? Yet these theories were once as firmly held and as decidedly based on Scripture as the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is based upon the word of Christ. The divinity of our Lord, however, is as firmly established as in the days of Galileo, or as in the youth of Hugh Miller. When we think that Christianity has survived the attacks of a Hume, a Gibbon, a Lessing, and a whole French Revolution, we shall probably not be much disturbed at the supposed subversive tendencies of a Wellhausen.